



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **BEST PRACTICES AT JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS UNITS**

by

Alice M. Crawford, Gail F. Thomas, and Armando X. Estrada

31 August 2004

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study reports best practices of successful Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) units. Key factors that influence high-performing units were identified from stakeholder surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Instructors of effective units prepare their students for life after high school with skills and knowledge that cannot be gained by other school curricula or extracurricular activities. They set high standards and tailor their programs to the unique culture of the school and the needs of the students, whether the needs are to help students get into college, maintain a winning drill team, or create a safe environment. As leaders, these instructors have adapted well to the educational environment. They work hard to create support for their unit in the school and in the community. The long hours they spend in community and school service create valuable citizenship and leadership development for the cadets, and bring positive recognition (and often resources) back to the unit. Recommendations are made to disseminate the best practices documented here to JROTC units and to incorporate them in instructor training. Other recommendations concern hiring practices, a review of the JROTC mission, metrics for success, and cross-service learning.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD-P&R) requested a review of the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) program. The purpose of the review was to examine issues of concern as identified by JROTC headquarters-level personnel. Researchers from the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) were asked to conduct the study.

This report documents one aspect of the review, which focuses on issues surrounding high-performing or “*successful*” JROTC units. Other project issues concerning instructor pay, possible curriculum consolidation, and information that can be learned from other youth citizenship/leadership programs are addressed in a separate report.<sup>1</sup>

### **PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to identify best practices of high performing JROTC units. While many of the people involved in JROTC have a general sense of factors that contribute to successful units, data have not been gathered systematically from the range of JROTC stakeholders. Assessing and documenting the full range of viewpoints will aid other units in improving their operations. Additionally, if headquarters develops metrics for effective units, these lessons learned can be incorporated into the measurement instruments.

### **BACKGROUND**

JROTC is a youth development program that began in the early 1900s. In the early years, the program was relatively small and had a strong focus on the military. Over the years, the program has received expanding support from Congress. From the original 30 Army units in 1916, JROTC has grown to more than 3,100 units from all services with federal support of nearly \$200 million per year.<sup>2</sup> Today the curriculum covers a wide variety of academic subjects including citizenship, communications, health, wellness, and leadership. Each service also teaches subjects related to their core competence: naval science for the Navy, aerospace for the Air Force, and military science for the Army and Marine Corps. All four services concentrate heavily on the citizenship and leadership aspects of the curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Laurence, J.H. and Estrada, A.X. (2003). A study of the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) program. Monterey, CA. Naval Postgraduate School.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication from each service headquarters, August 2003.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Each service operates a separate JROTC headquarters that administers policy, funding, and program management. Oversight for the entire JROTC program is provided by the Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy at the Pentagon.<sup>4</sup> Over 7200 instructors are charged with leading more than 480,000 high school students worldwide.<sup>5</sup> JROTC instructors are retired officers or non-commissioned officers who are certified by their respective services.

A limited number of reports have criticized JROTC for militaristic views and its influence on America's youth<sup>6</sup> but, for the most part, JROTC has been touted as a strong program that provides youth with much-needed skills in citizenship and leadership.<sup>7</sup> Further, studies have shown that students who participate in JROTC Career Academies have better attendance, grades, and graduation rates relative to students who were in general academic programs.<sup>8</sup> Principals and other administrators hold strong positive attitudes toward JROTC.<sup>9</sup> And, in general, JROTC does an effective job in promoting social and academic development among participating youth.<sup>10</sup> Further evidence of JROTC's success is the 750 schools that are on a waiting list to establish JROTC programs.

Given the strong evidence in support of the effectiveness of JROTC, this research is not intended to evaluate overall program effectiveness; rather the focus is on determining what factors contribute to the most successful JROTC units.

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<sup>4</sup> See Taylor, W.J. (1999). Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps: Contributing to America's Communities. Final report of the CSIS Political-Military Studies Project on the JROTC. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

<sup>5</sup> Personal communications from each service headquarters, August 2003.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Lutz, C. & Bartlett, L. (1995). JROTC: Making soldiers in the public school. *Education Digest*, 61, 9-14.

<sup>7</sup> See Funk, R.C. (2002). Developing leaders through high school Junior ROTC: Integrating theory and practice. *The Journal of Leadership Studies*, 8(4), 43-53.

<sup>8</sup> See Elliott, M.N., Hanser, L.M. and Gilroy, C.L. (2001). Evidence of positive student outcomes in JROTC career academies. Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, RAND.

<sup>9</sup> See Harrill, J.B. (1984). Attitudes held by host principals toward ARMY JROTC in the third region. Unpublished doctoral dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> For examples see Bulach, C.R. (2002). Comparison of character traits of JROTC students versus non-JROTC students. *Education*, 122(3), 559-563; Cassel, R.N., & Standifer, T. (2000). Comparing the leadership development between high school JROTC students and beginning college school administrator students. *Education*, 120(3), 422-426; DeMoulin, D.F., & Ritter, D.L. (2000). Comparison of democratic maturity and self-fulfillment between high school AFJROTC students and upper division college students. *Education*, 120(3), 410-415; Schmidt, R. (2001). JROTC students in leadership training display significantly higher personal development than typical students. *Education*, 122(2), 302-306.

## Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is:

*What are the best practices of successful JROTC units according to stakeholders most closely involved with the operations of the individual units?*

Stakeholders include JROTC students and instructors, other teachers in the school, counselors, school administrators (principals, vice principals, deans, curriculum coordinators), school superintendents, parents of JROTC students, JROTC program managers, and headquarters' staffs.

The secondary questions for this study are:

1. *What instructor practices contribute to a unit's success?*
2. *What motivates students to enter and stay in JROTC?*
3. *What do students learn from being in JROTC?*
4. *How can the program be improved?*

The research questions were addressed through surveys, interviews, and focus groups that were designed to elicit information about JROTC participants and their perceptions of the program. The methods are described next.

## **II. METHOD**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE DATA**

Initially, background work was conducted so the researchers could become more knowledgeable about the JROTC program. This information was essential for developing surveys, interview questions, and focus group protocols. Interviews and focus groups were designed to produce data that would elaborate on the survey data and capture unanticipated information about day-to-day life in JROTC units. All data collection opportunities were designed to accommodate resource constraints for travel and/or the schedules at JROTC sites or training meetings. Therefore, the data obtained were more often a result of a "*target of opportunity*" rather than an attempt to obtain statistical representation.

It should be noted that qualitative research and surveys produce a significant amount of data. Once analyzed, researchers can determine if the data, when taken together, are consistent and make sense. Over the course of interviews and focus groups, themes emerge from the data. When these themes are heard repeatedly, researchers can be fairly confident of accepting the data as representative, in this case, of high-performing JROTC units. More to the point, experienced JROTC headquarters personnel and the Department of Defense (DoD) sponsor should be able to extract the information they find useful from the data. The data, therefore, may be considered an extensive exploration of issues of interest to DoD and the JROTC service programs.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **Background Data Collection**

The study team began the project by attending the JROTC Tri-service meeting held at the National Drill Competition in Dayton Beach, Florida in May of 2002. Listening to the briefings and discussions during this period helped the researchers learn about the program and refine the study questions. Various interviews with headquarters and OSD personnel, conducted in person and by phone, also helped during this start-up process.

During the summer of 2002, data from all service headquarters were collected. Visits were made to two of the four service headquarters to interview top program managers and staff. Five Air Force program managers and staff were interviewed at Air Force JROTC headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama. In Quantico, Virginia two Marine Corps program managers were interviewed with another follow-up interview by phone. At this same time, the six Marine Corps Project Managers were interviewed. Five headquarters personnel and ten Area

Managers from the Navy were interviewed at an instructor-training meeting. Two program managers from the Army headquarters were interviewed by phone.

Pilot visits to four JROTC units (one from each service) were conducted to collect further background information about the JROTC program. Researchers interviewed 11 JROTC instructors, two administrators, and a counselor. In addition, the study team conducted four pilot focus groups with JROTC cadets.

### **Instructor Focus Groups and Survey**

During the summer and fall of 2003, researchers attended JROTC new instructor and refresher training meetings for all four services in various locations around the country. The meetings are designed to familiarize new instructors with policies and procedures, and to make experienced instructors aware of program changes. Meeting sites were selected as a function of available resources for traveling, and the timing and location of the meetings. Participants included 66 instructors from the Army, 36 from the Air Force, 50 from the Marine Corps, and none from the Navy (the Navy training schedule did not permit time for focus groups).

Focus groups were conducted (with about eight persons per group) with new and experienced instructors, and these sessions were recorded and later transcribed. (See the focus group protocol in Appendix A). “*New*” instructors were defined as those who had been in the job for less than year, and all others instructors were considered “*experienced*.” All focus group members were volunteers.

Additionally, 1,396 surveys were administered to all participants at these meetings. The number of survey participants is shown in Table 1. One survey was given (see Appendix B).

**Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Survey Respondents by Instructor Experience and Service**

<b>Service</b>	<b>New Instructors</b>	<b>Experienced Instructors</b>	<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>
Army	3.7	31.2	34.9
Navy	7.0	32.2	39.2
Air Force	5.9	9.5	15.4
Marine Corps	1.9	8.6	10.5
Total	18.5	81.5	100

a. Percentages are based on 1396 respondents.

## **Site Visits**

While the sites chosen for this study were not a random sample, the researchers were able to identify several variables that might account for differences in achievements, culture, and support for individual units. These variables included branch of military service; geographic region of the country; predominant ethnicity of cadets; size of the unit; location of the school (rural, inner city, or suburban); and socioeconomic status of the surrounding area. Resource constraints prevented visiting the number of units required to address all combinations of these variables. However, the researchers determined that visiting sites that reflected various combinations of the variables would produce valuable information for the project.

Sites were selected based on several criteria. First, the researchers asked service headquarters personnel to create a list of their top-performing units. They were asked to base these selections on the units that always received awards and high marks on inspections and consistently stood out as well-run units. Lists received from the various program managers were collated to determine which units appeared most frequently.

Selection of the second criterion for identifying site visits was based on obtaining a reasonably even distribution among the services. The project budget limited the number of visits to 16 units; four for the Air Force, five for the Navy, four for the Marine Corps, and three for the Army.

The third criterion was geographical representation. Two of the units were in Northern California, three in Southern California, one in Arizona, four in Texas, three in North Carolina, two in Florida, and one in Virginia.

The fourth criterion was variability in size. Unit sizes ranged from less than 100 cadets to almost 600, with the commensurate number of instructors.

The final goal was to visit some units that represented different areas. Two of the schools were in a rural area, five were inner-city schools, five were in suburban areas, and four were located in an urban area.

Researchers spent one day at each of the JROTC units, typically starting at 0700 hours and ending by 1630 hours. Some visits were shorter, due to either unit or researcher requirements.

For each unit, an attempt was made to conduct two or more focus groups with students (see Appendix C for the protocol), administer surveys to students (Appendix D), conduct interviews with administrators such as the

superintendent, principal or vice principals, deans, counselors, and teachers (Appendix E), JROTC instructors and other local administrators such as Director of Army Instruction (Appendix F), and parents (Appendix G).

Student groups were selected either because they were recommended by the instructors, but most often because they were in a class that was available during the visit.

While senior instructors were extremely helpful in setting up schedules, it was not possible to meet with all of these people at every unit. One reason for this was the normal scheduling conflicts that busy people experience, so it was particularly hard to get many parents or local administrators. The other reason was that these visits took place in May and June of 2003, which meant that the researchers visited at the end of the school year, typically one of the busiest times for schools. In spite of these limitations, everyone available within the schools was willing to help provide data for the study.

During the course of the visits, 272 students participated in focus groups. Four hundred four surveys were obtained from students in the focus groups as well as students in other classes who did not participate in groups

One or more JROTC instructors were interviewed at every unit visited for a total of 34 interviews. Twenty-one school administrators (principals, vice principals, deans, or superintendents) were interviewed; 43 teachers and counselors; 39 parents of JROTC students, and one Director of Army Instruction. The results are discussed in the next section.



### **III. RESULTS**

#### **OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONS AT SUCCESSFUL JROTC UNITS**

In addition to the unit variability designed into the site selection criteria, there are, of course many differences across the units that reflect the culture of the school and the particular combination of instructors and cadets in the unit. In fact, it was clear to the researchers that much of the success of these units was based on the leadership of the instructors that was deliberately tailored to the unique culture of the school and the needs of the students.

It is useful to begin by summarizing some of the differences as a background for the more detailed themes discovered in all or most of the units. In the end, this report shows how much these different, but all very successful, units have in common. The data presented throughout this section are drawn from all sources, i.e., the focus groups, interviews, and surveys at the 16 site visits, as well as the survey and focus group data collected at regional training meetings from hundreds of units.

## Mission Statements

Each service's mission statement follows:

### JROTC Mission Statements

Navy	To instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. <sup>11</sup>
Army	To motivate young people to be better citizens. <sup>12</sup>
Air Force	Building better citizens for America. The objectives are to educate and train high school cadets in citizenship, promote community service, instill responsibility, character, and self-discipline, and provide instruction in air and space fundamentals. <sup>13</sup>
Marine Corps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop informed and responsible citizens.</li><li>• Develop leadership skills.</li><li>• Strengthen character.</li><li>• Promote an understanding of the basic elements and requirements for national security.</li><li>• Help form habits of self-discipline.</li><li>• Develop respect for, and an understanding of, the need for constituted authority in a democratic society.<sup>14</sup></li></ul>

While each service has a slightly different mission, central to all is the development of citizenship. How each service's mission is interpreted and operationalized is reflected in the JROTC's instructors' comments.

The JROTC instructor survey asked each experienced instructor to rate ten possible aspects of their mission. The items were developed based on the pilot focus group sessions. The question's four-point scale ranged from "*Very Important*" to "*Not Very Important*." Based on the instructors' responses, the relative rating of the elements from most important to least are listed below:

- 1 Developing character/values*
- 1 Developing citizenship*
- 2 Developing leadership*

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<sup>11</sup> [www.njrotc.navy.mil/](http://www.njrotc.navy.mil/)

<sup>12</sup> [www-rotc.monroe.army.mil/jrotc/](http://www-rotc.monroe.army.mil/jrotc/)

<sup>13</sup> [www.afoats.af.mil/AFJROTC](http://www.afoats.af.mil/AFJROTC)

- 3 *Keeping students in school*
- 4 *Creating a sense of belonging*
- 5 *Teaching life skills*
- 6 *Creating openness in life opportunities*
- 7 *Improving academic performance*
- 8 *Creating interest in college*
- 9 *Creating interest in the military*

Of the 1122 experienced instructors who responded, “*Developing character/values*” and “*Developing citizenship*” rated equally as the most important element of their mission. These two elements ranked at the top for all four groups: Army, Navy, Marine Corp, and Air Force. “*Creating interest in the military*” was rated least important of the ten elements. Table 2 provides detailed data for each of the services.

<sup>1</sup> US Marine Corps JROTC Cadet Handbook

**Table 2. JROTC Mission Elements Rated “Very Important” by JROTC Instructors<sup>a</sup> (Percent)**

<b>Mission Element</b>	<b>Army</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Air Force</b>	<b>Marines</b>
Develop character/values	95	9	95	97
Develop citizenship	93	95	96	96
Develop leadership skills	86	89	85	93
Keep students in school	88	80	84	90
Create sense of belonging	82	82	82	92
Teach life skills	83	76	76	83
Create openness to more opportunities	71	68	73	73
Improve academic performance	67	60	64	63
Create interest in college	54	47	52	43
Create interest in military	13	11	8	19

a. There are 1122 survey respondents represented

Consistent with the survey responses, it was clear from the interviews that the instructors at the successful units are very focused on the development of citizenship, leadership, and life skills above all else. It was interesting to note that military-related activities and lessons are a means for development, but not an end that is given the highest priority. This observation was validated by interviews with administrators, counselors, and teachers who do not see recruiting students into the military as a goal of JROTC. Instructors want the best future for their students, whether or not this includes military service. They speak frequently and emphatically about preparing their students for “*real life*.” All instructors encourage college for most of their students, and many instructors hold public celebrations when students are accepted into college.

## Why Students Join and Stay

Students at all units were asked their intentions to join the military. In one inner city unit, a number of students expressed intentions to enlist after high school. In other units, some students expressed their hopes for NROTC scholarships in college, or service academy appointments. The majority of students planned to go to college, and most cadets were not sure whether the military would be in their future or not.

Students join JROTC for a variety of reasons. Of the 398 students who answered this question, about one-third said they join because of the activities, fun and friends. Another 23 percent join to improve their character or to improve themselves physically. Detailed responses to the question, "*What are some of your reasons for joining JROTC?*" are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Student Reasons for Joining JROTC<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Activities, Fun, and Friends	54.0
To improve physically or character	4.0
To learn about the military	17.0
Plan to join the military	18.0
To learn about leadership	12.0
As an alternative to PE	7.0

a. There are 398 survey respondents represented here. Each student could give up to three responses so the percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

Additional impetus to join JROTC may be the result of recommendations made by others. The student survey data showed that 66.3 percent joined JROTC because of a recommendation someone made to them, while 33.7 percent joined because they became interested during a JROTC recruiting visit to their middle school. Those who influenced students to join are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Recommendations Made by Others to Join JROTC<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Relationship to Cadet</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Friend	36.4
Sibling	20.7
Parent	17.7
Counselor/Teacher	12.8
Other family members	12.4
Total	100

a. There are 266 survey respondents represented here.

Student focus groups revealed that, in some cases, parents encouraged students to join, or even insisted because it would allow them to enter a better school than the one in their district. In an instructor focus group, the researchers were told that counselors often steer students to JROTC either because the students have problems that counselors think can be corrected in JROTC, or they may encourage those who have trouble fitting into other classes. In some regions of the country, a high percentage of students start out in school without a firm grasp of American English. Some counselors feel that placing these students in JROTC provides them with a gateway into the American way of life where they can learn what it's like to live in America.

Researchers heard in instructor focus groups that JROTC is often a good alternative to other activities for some kids. For example, they spoke of students who couldn't make sports teams or who couldn't afford an instrument to be in the band. Additionally, instructors spoke of students who were drawn to join the military because their parents would "*put them out of the house after graduation*" and it would give them something to do.

The student survey also asked whether or not they would enroll in the following term (75 percent said "yes"). More than 50 percent said they would return for the good experience, fun, activities and friends. Detailed responses are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Why Students Plan to Re-enroll in JROTC<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Good experience, fun, activities, friends	77.0
Emotional, physical, interpersonal benefits	16.0
Plan to pursue a future in the military	10.0
Want to obtain a JROTC leadership position	8.0
Other related to course credits	1.0
Other	16.0

a. There are 349 respondents represented here. Each student could give up to three responses so the percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

Of the students (25 percent) who said they would not re-enroll, 18 percent were graduating seniors, five percent had schedule conflicts, and the other two percent said they no longer enjoyed JROTC. Information from the focus groups indicated that, at some schools, depending on scheduling, it is difficult for students to participate in JROTC and also get all the classes they need to enter college. A few students reported attending summer school so they could stay in JROTC.

Some students leave because of limited top leadership positions. The researchers learned early in the visits that instructors are comfortable with this natural

attrition as there can only be so many leaders. Another reason for leaving, reported by JROTC students, is that some students do not like the discipline required, nor do they like being told what to do by peers.

### **Credits for JROTC Participation**

The school credits offered for JROTC participation were mostly in physical education and elective, but several schools offered academic credit in topics such as history. Everyone seemed satisfied with the credit scheme at his or her particular school.

### **How JROTC is Perceived by Other Students**

The way JROTC cadets were viewed by the rest of the school varied widely across the units. In some units, JROTC is so much a part of the school, and so valued by all that there is little need for the unit to recruit. For example, in one school the military ball drew more attendance (425) than the prom (165). In other units, cadets are subject to negative labels, particularly on uniform day.

It was interesting to the researchers that administrators in these schools, in response to the question, *"How do other students view JROTC?"* almost all said that JROTC cadets were viewed positively on campus. Counselors and teachers were more aware of the variety of perceptions about JROTC. One counselor said,

*"Yes, there is name calling from some, but the students who do that have negative labels for everyone else. Most view the cadets positively, especially those in sports because they see the long hours the cadets put in, for example in drill team practices."*

Many commented that the perceptions of JROTC on campus had become more positive since 9/11.

Perhaps most interesting of all is that students who mentioned name calling in focus groups also said they are not bothered by this because it eventually stops or because the people calling them names *"are losers"* or *"don't understand what we do—they think it's all military stereotypes, that we do pushups and get yelled at a lot."* In this context, many students felt that there should be more publicity about *"what we really do in JROTC and why we like it so much."*

## What Students Like About Being in JROTC

Students in JROTC have a lot to say with respect to what they like about JROTC. In the survey given to 404 students, 97 percent said they would recommend JROTC to friends. Details about what they like are provided next.

**Activities.** While students who were on drill team cited it as the best thing about being in JROTC, all activities, in general, were a key motivator for staying. As one student said, *"Without the teams and activities, JROTC is just another class."* The cadets love performing, the admiration that get, and they like the trophies when they win. Students at every school invited the researchers to look at their collection of trophies. JROTC provides students numerous opportunities to enjoy this type of competition.

The range of activities at the schools was interesting. In some schools, particularly the larger units, the drill teams had placed or won at the yearly National Championships in Daytona Beach, Florida. At the other extreme, there was much less emphasis on drill, or other teams, and more of an emphasis on more academically oriented competition. One unit, for example, hosted the *"Academic Challenge"* every year (and often won), and also had the winning chess team in the area. In between these extremes one can find model aircraft clubs, bowling leagues, orienteering teams, step teams, pep squads, and the list goes on.

The activities are an extremely important part of the success and high morale of these units. Administrators, counselors, teachers, and instructors all talked about the connection between the activities and the benefits that come to the cadets because of them.

**Camaraderie.** It's often difficult to separate the camaraderie from the activities when cadets talk about why they like JROTC. Camaraderie was mentioned frequently as a motivator for being in JROTC and much of it is experienced from participation in the teams or other out-of-class activities such as community service.

Some cadets experience camaraderie because JROTC is their total social circle. Many of the instructors interviewed during focus group sessions suggested that for many students, JROTC is a niche that they wouldn't find elsewhere. Other cadets value the friendships they've made, but also have friends in other extra-curricular clubs or sports. They report that JROTC has given them the chance to make friends with people they otherwise never would have met and that this takes place in an accepting environment where *"everyone is nice."* One thing most agreed on is that *"everyone is equal here, and everyone feels wanted here."*

Many students also singled out the value of automatically having a group of friends and a sense of belonging upon entering high school. Or, as one counselor said, "*They acquire 200 instant friends.*"

A related issue is that the cadets feel good about the kind of people they associate with in the unit. Some said that they feel judged by others in the high school but never in the unit. And, they feel good about having friends who are people they can depend on.

**Discipline.** It is sometimes difficult, too, to separate out the discipline cadets learn from the activities. Cadets at every unit talked about how good they felt about becoming disciplined people. Many cadets commented that they are far more disciplined than their peers outside of JROTC, and they appreciate the fact that their instructors care about discipline even though some teachers in the school do not. They feel that they set higher standards for themselves than do others at their age and are very good at following through on what they are told to do.

Discipline, to these students, means doing the right thing with honesty and integrity, working hard toward goals, being responsible, and being respectful of others. They value respect for their peers and seniors and feel that their instructors respect them. Many told us how much their teachers outside of the unit appreciate their use of the terms "*sir*" and "*ma'am*." One student, in talking about the importance of respect for authority said that when he recently observed a student talking back to a teacher in class, he found himself wondering, "*What is he thinking*!"

**Progress Up the Chain of Command.** Cadets talked a lot about how rewarding it is to have so many opportunities to obtain leadership positions in the unit. They enjoy the feedback they get about their progress and competence, and it motivates them to stay. In general, gaining rank and earning ribbons is very rewarding to the cadets. On the other hand, as noted earlier, since there are few leadership positions at the top, this becomes a reason why some leave JROTC after a few years.

**Pride of Association.** Many students talked about how proud they are to be associated with the JROTC unit at their school. Some of these comments were framed positively because the unit was highly visible and well known in the school and the community. Others felt that being in JROTC allowed them to excel and stand apart from negative aspects of the school. One student said,

*"Lots of people think this school is ghetto, but JROTC is different. Kids from other schools hear I'm in JROTC here and that's a different story."*



*They look up to me for the choice I made to come here. I feel like a celebrity when I wear my uniform."*

Other students talked specifically about the pride of being associated with the military and said things like, *"It's an honor to wear the uniform."*

**Realistic Preview of Military Life.** Students said that for those who were going to join the military, JROTC should provide a realistic job preview and a *"leg up"* in skills and pay grade as compared to those who had not been in JROTC. The students also saw benefits for those entering ROTC in college. From stories passed down by others who had gone before them, cadets felt they would be far more comfortable with the military culture, requirements, and practices than others. Additionally, JROTC makes them very knowledgeable about opportunities in all branches of the military.

### **What Students Learn from JROTC**

While there is some overlap between what students say they like and what they learn, this section provides more specific detail about the outcomes of the JROTC experience.

**The Curriculum Content.** When asked what they learn in JROTC, the students said relatively little about the class curriculum, even when pressed with the specific follow up of, *"What, specifically, do you learn from your class materials?"* The researchers heard three kinds of comments about the curriculum

The most frequent comment about the value of the curriculum was that cadets felt more informed about what is going on in world events and more knowledgeable about the military. They see value in learning who's who in the national military chain of command, as well as military traditions and history. This applied whether or not they had intentions of going in the military. As one cadet said, she knew more about the community now. For example, she can now identify the Navy ships sitting in the harbor.

Another frequently mentioned topic concerned the communications skills they learn. Cadets at every unit talked about how they have learned to be comfortable with public speaking, and this translates to an enhanced willingness to speak up in other classes. They also commented that their speaking experiences in JROTC have taught them to *"think on their feet."*

While students value the chance to learn about current events, military affairs, and speaking skills, these areas were far outweighed by what they felt they learned by participating in the full range of JROTC activities—in class and out. As one student said,

*"Map reading, first aid, using compasses, financial planning, living a healthy lifestyle and these things will be good whether or not you go in the military. The book stuff is okay, but the life lessons we learn are more important."*

**Life Lessons.** The list here is long and was replicated at every unit visited. Students repeatedly commented on the value of what they were learning at JROTC for life after high school and/or college.

First, students talk about the leadership they learn from student and instructor role models, from coaching and mentoring, and from hands-on opportunities to lead. Students note that even their more quiet peers have the opportunity to lead. (There were cadets at every school who said that they used to be very shy but were now more outgoing, self confident, and assertive.)

Examples of leadership skills concerned learning to set the example for others, how to listen to others' opinions, peer counseling, the ability to adapt to change, distinguishing personal from professional issues and feedback, and learning self-control. One cadet told the researchers that he had gotten promoted to a leadership position in his job outside of school because he stood out from his peers as a result of the leadership skills he had learned in JROTC.

In discussing leadership, cadets were quick to mention that they learn to lead *and* to follow. Further, they see skills in leadership development as a valuable skill for later life. Some students spoke of the pleasure they take in knowing their efforts have resulted in growth and development of younger cadets.

Cadets feel strongly that they learn invaluable people skills such as social skills, learning to work with different types of personalities and those who think differently. And, as a result, they are more open minded and tolerant of differences.

Cadets learn basic organization skills such as planning, organizing, time management, prioritizing, paying attention to detail, and goal setting as a result of all JROTC activities. Examples of these skills are provided in the section *"Cadets Run the Unit."*

Finally, the cadets had much to say about learning to be part of a team. It starts with so many different types of people coming together to do a task and leads to the realization that *"you can't do it alone," "it's not just all about me,"* and *"it's important to make others look good."* Many cadets cited good teamwork as what they are most proud of about being in JROTC.

## What Other Stakeholders Say About JROTC

Parents, instructors, counselors, teachers and administrators agree strongly that most cadets are more disciplined, mature, and self-confident than other students in the school, and they give the cadets positive recognition because of it. Each of these groups has a slightly different emphasis when they talk about the outcomes of JROTC.

**Parents.** Parents' comments most closely resembled students', although they talked more about how much their children had changed for the better since entering JROTC, their appreciation of the good peer group their children had acquired in the unit, and the future opportunities gained (such as scholarships). They also more readily recognize, and give credit for, the strong role the instructors play in making these things happen.

**Instructors.** The instructors' focus is on the growth and development of their cadets. One instructor said, *"It's really quite amazing what these kids can achieve."* They also noted that students who might otherwise never have any connection with the military leave with more of an appreciation of the US Armed Forces.

**Counselors and Teachers.** Counselors' and teachers' comments are similar to each other. One thing both groups talk about is that JROTC creates an identity for many of its members; that it becomes their *"team"* or *"club"* like any other in high school, but they say that JROTC builds leadership more than band or sports. Many said that JROTC builds responsibility in a manner that no other class can do and that this makes the cadets feel good about themselves. Most of the teachers and counselors were very enthusiastic about having JROTC in their school. One teacher said,

*"If you took away JROTC here, we would be just another inner-city school. JROTC is special; we like it because it works."*

Others made comments that compared cadets to other students. Here are some of their comments:

*When students transfer into JROTC, their grades go up.  
These students are not our behavior problems, and they do well academically.*

*They carry themselves differently and the contrast is striking. They set a tone. How could we not like that?*

*They have an enormous amount of pride.*

*They are role models for many of the other students.*

*They have a good influence on students in other classes.*

*JROTC connects them; kids drop out when they aren't connected to something.*

*They learn to make rational vs. emotional decisions.*

*They are learning to be good citizens; many have gotten out of gangs.*

*JROTC cadets are more motivated.*

Counselors and teachers also talked about JROTC participation in school activities. Many said that cadets volunteer to help at school activities such as parents' night, and graduation, and the help they give is invaluable. One said, *"You can always count on these kids."*

**Administrators.** Administrators also talk about how much they depend on JROTC for school event support. Further, they value the impact of JROTC volunteer work in the community, which is discussed in a later section of this report.

One administrator noted that a transformation is going on in high schools to break them into smaller academies. (The researchers saw this at a number of the schools visited.) These academies are designed to provide specialized knowledge, more personalized attention for students, and increased time for developing multiple aspects of students. The administrator pointed out that, in this sense, JROTC has always been *"an academy."* This school was in the process of moving to eight separate learning academies, and they used JROTC as the model for their plans.

While administrators all expressed support for JROTC, some were more enthusiastic than others. One administrator appreciates JROTC because, *"It sets students up for future success."* Another pointed out that *"JROTC is cost effective and a good partnership."* Yet another said, *"I wouldn't have a school without a JROTC unit."*

The benefits described in this section may be attributed in large part to the factors described next.

## BEST PRACTICES OF SUCCESSFUL JROTC UNITS

The themes derived from the data collected at the sites were seen repeatedly, regardless of the branch of military service, geographic region of the country; predominant ethnicity of cadets, size of the unit, unit location, and the socioeconomic status of the surrounding area.

### Instructors Work Long Hours

All instructors interviewed for this project work long hours. Twelve to 14 hours a day, at least one day during the weekend, and many hours in the summer are not unusual. As one Navy Area Manager said, *"These jobs take a lot of time before and after school...if you're not willing to put in the time, you're not going to have a good unit."* And, students, school administrators, and other teachers frequently commented on the long instructor workdays. One counselor said,

*"Instructors are incredibly enthusiastic. They work long hours behind the scenes to make it all happen."*

The reasons that instructors spend long hours at successful units are described below.

**Classes, Activities, and Resources.** Instructors can be kept quite busy teaching classes, doing administrative work, and dealing with the various activities that are part of a JROTC unit. As noted above, the teams and other activities are a big part of why cadets love JROTC. The teams are where much of the discipline is learned and most of the camaraderie is experienced. Cadets at every unit talked to the researchers about the satisfaction of competition, especially when they win. They talked with pride about the hard work and long hours they put into practices after school and during the summer. More team activities seem to equate to a more satisfied unit, but also increase the workload for the instructors. In schools with fewer resources where money is limited for busses, the workload is even higher as instructors spend considerable time dealing with the logistics of getting students to competitions. Further, more time is spent in fund raising in such schools. Students and instructors complained about the time spent in fundraising for camps, competitions, field trips, and other activities. One instructor felt strongly that time spent in fund raising detracts from the mission of developing cadets because *"it's a zero-sum game."* Interestingly, students at some units complained about fund-raising activities (e.g., *"We ended up doing a car wash on a Saturday instead of a competition..."*), while others saw it as just one more opportunity to have fun with their friends.

The differences in resources available to the units were dramatic and are, apparently, due to service differences as well as support to the unit from the school and the community. One Marine Project Manager commented that *"The support some units are given by schools is phenomenal; other schools don't have the money to give them a dime over what the services provide."* Some portion of this may be controlled by the instructor's ability and willingness to create relationships and acquire resources from other stakeholders (see the section below, "Instructors Create Good Relationships With Others in the School System").

In one school, several cadets chose to attend a JROTC weekend competition even though they were not competing. They felt it was important to just be there to support their fellow cadets. They were able to do this easily because the unit could afford to provide bus transportation for them. In another unit, the researchers observed a conversation between a cadet and the Senior Instructor in which the cadet wanted to attend a competition to support his unit. Twenty-seven cars had been organized for the event, but the Senior Instructor had to tell him that there were only enough spaces for the cadets who were competing. The cadet volunteered to take a city bus and meet them at the event.

**A Home Away from Home.** Instructors create a second home at the JROTC unit for the students to come before and after school. Often, after-school time is structured for duties related to running the unit or team practices. Other time is available for just socializing in a safe environment. One student said,

*"I would rather be here than home. There's always something to do."*

The cadets appreciate having a place to come to spend time with their friends. They speak of it as *"our club," "our gang," "our building,"* and *"our piece of the school."*

Parents appreciate having a safe environment for their children to come to, especially in families with two working parents or a single parent. Students at these units all said that they could come at any time—the doors are always open.

In some areas a safe environment was more important than others. In these cases, it was clear that the family home was the environment that was not safe. One student said,

*"For many of us, this is all we've got because of families, or whatever. I spend more time here than anywhere."*

And, as one student said,

*"JROTC has kept a lot of kids out of trouble at this unit. Lots of us, including me, were headed in a bad direction before we joined JROTC."*

A school superintendent observed that sometimes cadets come from good homes, but maybe the parents aren't around a lot, or there isn't much money, and JROTC provides something they aren't getting at home.

One JROTC instructor said,

*"This is a very depressed area. We could be here 24/7. Kids don't want to go home because it's not a good environment."*

**Surrogate Parents.** Much of the work that instructors do can be seen as performing the role of a surrogate parent. They help cadets get into college or the military, they help them pursue scholarship opportunities, and they spend enormous amounts of time counseling them about their future and their personal lives. Students at *every* school visited made the following kinds of comments about their instructors:

*They prepare us for life.*

*I can talk to them about anything. I tell them things I wouldn't tell anyone else.*

*They listen to us.*

*I'm proud of our instructors. I see others at competitions that aren't as caring as ours are.*

*Our instructors know us personally and care about us. Many of our teachers don't even know our names.*

*Our instructors play a big part in our lives. They help us solve problems.*

*Our instructors make us all feel important.*

Parents all made comments such as, *"Kids love the instructors."* And, *"They know the instructors are always here for them."* A principal said, *"They love each kid individually."* One student said,

*"When I was a freshman, my father died, and I was going in a bad direction. The instructors helped me to know that I was capable of so much more. They still check in on me."*

All students reported that a huge motivator for staying in JROTC is the sense of belonging they feel and the camaraderie they experience. Many students at every school referred to JROTC as being like their family. They often used the specific words of "*my brothers*," or "*my sisters*." A principal characterized instructors at his school as "*father figures*." This sense of family is very rewarding to cadets and in no small part due to the time instructors spend creating opportunities for them to socialize and engage in the unit activities.

### **Instructors Are Enthusiastic**

In general, instructors are very enthusiastic about JROTC. The survey of 1137 experienced instructors showed that an average of 97 percent of them "*Agreed*" or "*Agreed Strongly*" that they would recommend the job of JROTC instructor to a friend.

Instructors acknowledge that key factors in operating a successful unit include enjoying working with kids and putting in long hours. As one said, "*You must be an overachiever to get everything done well; it takes a lot of hours, and you must love working with kids because the pay for these hours isn't the motivator.*"

Data from instructor focus groups showed that other motivators for instructors include the sense of making a difference; love of teaching; giving back something to the military, to the country, to society, or the community; having fun; and continued association with the military. The most frequently mentioned source of instructor motivation was giving back something. As one new instructor said in a focus group,

*"I had seen the young men in my church in need of mentoring and figured it would probably be the same in the schools so I started substitute teaching, which I've done for the last year. Before that, I didn't know what it was like. These kids latch on, and many have nobody else to latch on to. I found myself getting excited getting out of my car in the parking lot in the morning and finally thought that if I became a JROTC instructor, I'd never need to question why I was doing the work."*

### **Instructors Are Flexible Leaders**

Instructors in successful units adapt their leadership styles to the unique requirements of their cadets and units, which are, in turn, linked to the culture of the school. The culture of every unit visited for this study was remarkably different from one another. Instructors, no matter how long they had been in the job, were able to talk about the needs of their particular school and cadets. They were able to create a culture within the unit that was a good fit within the system.



This process was seen in the way the instructor framed and implemented the JROTC mission to build better citizens. For some, it was a matter of making everything fun to keep the cadets engaged in positive behaviors. For others, it was putting a lot of emphasis on competitions and building on the pride of the successes. Another emphasis was keeping the cadets focused on scholarship opportunities and other avenues to college. One instructor said that his mission was simply to get the kids through school and feeling good about themselves. A Navy Area Manager said that good instructors are broad based; they find a place for every cadet to make a contribution to the unit.

There is also the ethnic culture of the majority of cadets to be considered. One instructor said that each JROTC unit must accommodate student ethnic groups. He cited as an example the fact that some ethnic groups are not comfortable administering discipline and it is, therefore, inappropriate for this to be a part of their JROTC leadership experience.

Flexibility is also seen in the approach most of these instructors take to the curriculum. All said that they do not want to be rigidly bound to getting through all of the material given to them by their service headquarters. Most instructors feel that it's the fun in the activities that draws students to belong to JROTC, not the curriculum. Yet, they encourage their students to do well in their non-JROTC classes and support their work for those classes in a variety of ways. However, many said that their mission of developing cadets is, in some sense, at odds with a lot of time spent in the curriculum.

Most instructors feel the flexibility to tailor the curriculum in a manner to best develop their students, and they do not worry about not getting through all of the materials. For example, using the seniors in leadership roles rather than having them sit through classes seemed to be a common practice. This practice changes for courses given for specific academic credits, such as geography in which case the approach is more structured like a traditional classroom.

### **Instructors Adapt Effectively to the Educational Environment**

Successful instructors have learned to let go of expectations that all organizations should be run like military systems, and they have adapted to the educational environment. (As one instructor noted, "*You must know the battlefield,*" or another said, "*You have to get out of the foxhole.*") Moving from the military to the school environment can be difficult in many ways, not the least of which is losing a support staff along with the ability to order people to do things for them. Yet, these instructors have made the transition smoothly to a civilian organization.

Instructors believe it is important to understand that *"these are kids, not soldiers,"* and that instructors must *"get out of the active-duty mentality and know that you've had your day in the sun; this is about the kids."* One counselor had been in another school with a less successful unit. Her observation about that school was that the instructors didn't seem to have been picked very well. She said,

*"They must be teachers and like kids, not authority figures. At this school, [her present job in a school with a successful unit] kids with a problem go to JROTC instructors before anyone else. They will even talk to the instructors about college issues before they'll come to the counselors."*

A comment made in a focus group with experienced instructors elaborated on the concept:

*Some instructors leave because they came in for the wrong idea. They came in with the idea that they are going to run a little military base and they get very disappointed when they find out that the discipline isn't what they would expect.... If you don't have the mental condition to go in and realize that you're dealing with kids who are in high school, not 18 year olds who are in the military, and you can help them develop to that point, it's going to be the most frustrating job you even had in your whole life.*

A Director of Army Instruction is convinced that JROTC instructors who *"haven't left the military yet"* are not successful because *"we are teaching, not shaping recruits."*

During the course of the research, many stories were told in interviews and focus groups of JROTC instructors who judged the educational environment as lacking in comparison to the military environment. These instructors were frustrated and did not do well. The successful instructors interviewed for this research viewed their new environment simply as different, and one they needed to learn more about to be effective leaders.

Successful instructors are very clear on who their bosses are. They work for the school principal, their service headquarters, and in some cases a Director of Army Instruction (DAI). The researchers were surprised to overhear the

following advice given at a new-instructor conference: *"Forget the DAI, you don't work for him."* Yet, one Navy instructor at a site visited was very clear on the importance to the well being of his unit to manage that relationship with the DAI.

### **Instructors Set High Standards**

Students, parents, school administrators, and teachers, all talked about the high standards that JROTC instructors set for cadets. These standards may apply to JROTC competitions, school academic standards, or both, depending on the school. Cadets, in turn, learn to set high standards for themselves.

In one school in which many of the students go on to college, one of the JROTC instructors said, *"Academics are taken very seriously in this particular school, and we are very hard on academics."* A student said, *"The Colonel makes us study a lot; he pushes grades and that helps us in other classes."* The principal noted that the discipline taught in JROTC translated to cadets having some of the best grades in the school. A parent commented that she appreciated the academic award included in the end-of-year awards for JROTC.

Other students talked about high, positive expectations placed on them with respect to their competitions. Their instructor said,

*"We go to win. Losing is ok but we go to win and the students like that."*

The students agreed.

At another unit, where few students go on to college, high uniform standards were set. Here, more than any school visited, the cadets were extremely proud of the way they looked in uniform. They talked about the high self-esteem they felt on uniform days at school and when they looked sharp at competitions.

It goes without saying that high standards set by instructors, when met by students, lead to positive expectations for success in other areas of life. This same phenomenon takes place where instructors let students run the unit.

### **Cadets Run the Unit**

To varying degrees across the units visited, cadets run many of the unit operations, from team practices to managing inventory and ordering new uniforms. For example, in a number of the units, students were totally responsible for putting on the yearly military ball. While their plans were, of course, subject to the approval of the instructors, the students were responsible for all planning and execution of the event. In another unit, the researchers

observed a staff meeting run totally by and for the cadets. Numerous aspects of unit operations were briefed and decisions were made in an efficient and professional manner. In one unit, a cadet was put in charge of the research visit, which involved many meetings over an eight-hour period that included lunch with the cadets.

It is clear that cadets learn responsibility and have an enormous amount of pride for the work that they do for the unit. One student said,

*"I belong to a lot of other clubs on campus, e.g., ASB. At those, you just show up. Here, you learn."*

Another said, *"Our jobs here are like real life; there are real consequences to what we do."*

At one unit, the third-year cadets were editing materials that they would use to teach the freshman in the next school year. This seemed like a creative, hands-on learning experience for these students and certainly one that made them feel more ownership for the development of the younger cadets.

In general, the researchers (who both have experience with high-school-age students) were continually amazed and impressed at the maturity levels, and planning and organization abilities of JROTC cadets. Of particular note were the cadet briefings received at several of the units. Cadets created and presented organizational briefs on their units that were comparable in quality to those observed in older and more-experienced speakers.

It appeared that the more the students were allowed to run the unit, the more energized they were about JROTC and their own abilities. One instructor noted that some instructors are uneasy about turning over too much responsibility to the cadets but felt that one must let them do so because it teaches them so much and gives them so much pride. A different instructor said,

*"We've created a Frankenstein! They love to be involved; they can't stand not being involved."*

A student said, *"The instructors keep things safe and sane; we do the rest."*

To sum up, one counselor observed, *"It's just amazing; those kids run the place."* Nonetheless, this success factor can be credited to good leadership by the JROTC instructors who allow their cadets to run the unit. As one instructor says to his students,

*"This is my NS [Naval Science] class, but this is **YOUR** unit. If the unit is not good, that's because of you. This is not a day-care center.*

### **Instructors Create Good Relationships with Others in the School System**

Successful instructors take the initiative to learn who's who in the school, and who has the power and resources. They work proactively to create good relationships with their new colleagues. The predictable result, as pointed out by one parent, is a high level of support from administrators and teachers. In one dramatic example, the school principal gave the unit \$25,000 from his own budget so that the drill team could attend the national competition.

Instructors in one focus group agreed that *"getting the principal on your side" might even determine the survivability of the unit.* There were numerous comments in focus groups about the difficulties of working in schools and communities where there were anti-military sentiments. However, this issue never came up in site visits, which shouldn't be surprising. Since only successful units were visited, and because it's clear that success is related to support from the environment (either by chance or through deliberate efforts of the instructor), the units visited did not have to deal with that problem.

A Navy Area Manager commented that good instructors fit well within the administration community, and they know what the school objectives are. He also said *"they interact with the other instructors at the school as well. For example, they work with the band, not against it."*

In all but one of the schools visited, the researchers observed that while the instructor was escorting them to the meetings around campus, it became clear that these instructors were known and liked by all. It was often the case that quick bits of business were transacted during these brief interactions. Instructors are clearly an integral part of these schools. In one focus group an instructor noted that, *"You've got to understand the politics that are going on around you."*

Administrators, teachers, and counselors spoke in glowing terms of the help they get from the JROTC instructors and cadets. One Vice Principal said,

*"We have come to rely so heavily on the cadets for serving as ushers, to manage parking at sports events, to handout programs at back-to-school night, and so on, that I don't know what we'd do without them."*

Many of the instructors participate as full faculty members at the school including volunteering to sit on various committees, and they perform various extra duties that earn them appreciation and support from the administration and faculty.

Many administrators appreciate that JROTC instructors are willing to take all students, even those with problems, for the purpose of *"getting them squared away."* One instructor noted that his predecessor would not take everyone and that this didn't earn him many points with the administrators.

Instructors work collaboratively with other school organizations when there is conflict for a student's after-school time. This wins them support around the school. Further, instructors also see the benefit for a well-rounded student, i.e., they recognize the value of other extra-curricular activities, especially for getting into college. An instructor said,

*"JROTC can't be their whole life. You want them to do a lot with us, but not to the exclusion of their other classes and activities."*

### **Instructors Are Good Role Models**

Instructors, according to all interviews, are good role models. They work hard, they stay focused on the development of the cadets and, in turn, they teach the cadets to be good role models for the younger members of the unit. Many administrators commented about the value of the instructors as positive role models for students outside of JROTC, too. Parents commented on the importance of their children having the instructors for good role models given the amount of time the students spend away from home.

### **Instructors Are a Strong Team**

Instructors, administrators, counselors, teachers, and parents all commented on the value of a good team relationship among the instructors. Many echoed one parent's comment: *"Success of the unit is due to the cohesiveness of unit, which is all due to instructors who work well together and are in it for the kids."* Where this happens, instructors can use complementary skills. Additionally, they commented, a strong team of instructors is more effective than a group of individuals. For example, one instructor commented that they must *"work like parents or they'll play you off of each other."*

In some cases, good relationships among the instructors developed quite by chance. In others, the relationship was due to a deliberate hiring practice. In one case, credit was given to the local Director of Army Instruction (DAI) who worked hard to hire the right person for the job as *"opposed to the first person who walked through the door."* A Master Sergeant with a good reputation and

many years of experience at several units had been in place at one unit for quite some time. When the time came to select a new Senior Instructor, the DAI sent four different retired Colonels or Lieutenant Colonels to the unit to talk to the Master Sergeant. He rejected all four of them and finally gave his approval to the fifth applicant. When the researchers spoke to this team, the Senior Instructor and Master Sergeant were nearing the end of their second year together, enjoying continued success in the unit. The relationship between the two was evident when the Senior Instructor referred to the Master Sergeant as *"my mentor."*

The reasons reported by the Master Sergeant for rejecting the four applicants were interesting. The rejections were due to either an expectation on the part of the senior officer that this would be an easy job in which he could enjoy his retirement from active duty, or an expectation that he was the *Senior Officer*, meaning that he expected an active duty rank relationship. In other words, the senior officer would call the shots and set the tone for the unit. Both of these reasons were echoed in interviews at other units, often in stories of how not to run a good unit and exemplified by tales of problems at other units.

### **JROTC Units Create Support in the Community Through Community Service Activities.**

All units visited engaged in extensive community service, including such activities as beach/river clean ups, reading to the elderly, Adopt a Highway, and church food drives. The community service seemed to reap many benefits for the individual students as the JROTC unit. One school administrator attributes passage of a bond that gave them a spacious new building to their visibility in the community. Another knows that the scholarships they receive from a local service organization (Rotary Club) are related to the work they do at Rotary events such as serving as ushers, parading the colors, and clean up. The researchers had the opportunity to speak with this particular Rotary Club at a regularly scheduled luncheon that the Senior JROTC instructor attends. One club member's comments captured the club's feelings about how highly they think of this Marine Corps unit:

*These are great kids. They help us with working at various events; we count on them, and they come through every time. They are disciplined and well behaved. They set a good example for other kids.*

One unit in an economically depressed area had such extensive support in the community, that it was typical for the Mayor and City Council to attend their award ceremonies. School administrators appreciated such strong connections, or in the words of an Army Director of Instruction, *"The principals appreciate the 'arm' to the community."* A school superintendent said that when the cadets are

out and visible in the community, they get a lot of recognition and support; this success, then, feeds on itself.

While it is clear that everyone benefits from the community service done by JROTC units, one of the researchers became curious about what the benefits are for the cadets. When asked if they did community service to fulfill the hours some schools require for graduation, the researcher was told that they do so much service that they stop keeping track of the hours because they exceed the requirements sometime during their sophomore year. Instead, they were motivated primarily by altruistic and social values. They talked of the pleasure they get from helping, and the fun they have spending weekend time with members of their unit. Two comments reflect their input:

*When we spend time at the home for the elderly, it makes them so happy. I see them smile and it makes me smile.*

Everything our unit does is fun. These are my friends, and community service is one more opportunity to spend time together having fun.

Many cadets cited community service as one of the things they are most proud of about belonging to JROTC.

A final benefit of JROTC community involvement, as noted by one counselor, comes from visibility the unit gains from community involvement: *parents become aware of JROTC and want their kids to be involved, kids are motivated by the successes they see, and it becomes a snowball effect.*

### **Units Have Outreach Programs**

Most units have active outreach programs in the middle schools that feed their high schools. Often, JROTC instructors send cadets to these schools, in uniform, to encourage the students to join when they come to high school. The cadets they send are graduates of these schools and, in some cases, recent graduates, so they still know students in the middle school.

Some instructors make videos or brochures of unit activities to send to middle schools. One JROTC unit sends letters to the parents of all students graduating from three middle schools. As noted earlier, the student survey data showed that about 33 percent of students join JROTC because of a cadet visit to their middle school.

In some schools, this kind of outreach isn't necessary because the unit is such a tradition in the community. In one school, the number of students the unit could take was capped at 250. Given the tradition in the community exemplified by



one cadet being a third-generation member of that unit, they always had all the students they could handle.

## **SUCCESS DUE TO STRUCTURAL FACTORS**

Structural factors are built into some units that help to create success. For example, scheduling systems differ across schools and some result in fewer conflicts for time for students to take advanced placement classes for college. The result is more time for sports, band, JROTC, and other activities.

As noted earlier, some schools do not have to struggle for resources to the extent of others. This relates to school budget that can be given to JROTC, and the local district pay scale to attract good instructors.

Having a JROTC unit in a strong military community also has benefits. As noted earlier, it is helpful in many ways to exist in a culture that is supportive of JROTC. One district visited in San Antonio, Texas has seven high schools. JROTC units exist in all but one of those schools. It was in this district that the researchers saw particularly strong connections among JROTC, the schools, and the community.

Many instructors acknowledged that knowing students over a period of several years is an advantage that other teachers do not have. This longer time together helps the instructors form the relationships in which they can exert positive influence.

Some of the units visited have JROTC Booster Clubs in which enthusiastic parents aid in activities such as fund raising, transportation, and web site maintenance. The Booster Clubs become a part of the support structure, and these parents clearly play a major role in the success of the unit.

## **CHANGES SUGGESTED BY STAKEHOLDERS**

Instructors, administrators, parents, and students were asked how JROTC might be improved. Few had much to say, but the ones who did made the comments described next.

### **Publicity and Recognition**

Some comments were centered on creating more publicity or recognition for the unit—either in the school or in general. One counselor said,

*"No one sees drill team and they are great. Let them do half time instead of the band; it would give the kids more recognition."*

One student said she wished there could be a billboard placed on main roads saying, "*Check out JROTC!*" Many students commented that a lot of people in the community, and even some in the school, did not know enough about what they really do in JROTC, and that JROTC should be promoted more.

### **More School Support**

Some students had minor complaints such as one group that said that the school should support them more by scheduling around them as they do for sports teams, for example not scheduling prom during the same week as the National Drill Competition.

### **More Resources from Headquarters**

The most frequent answer to the question of what should be changed about JROTC was that they should be given more resources. Cadets always said they wanted more activities, administrators (in all but one case where there was a new building) wanted better facilities for the unit, and instructors can always use more budget (sometimes including pay). Transportation seemed to be the focus of attention for both instructors and students. Additional resources would mean an ability to attend more JROTC events without spending an inordinate amount of time on fundraising activities.

A school superintendent said,

*"We just made huge cuts to next year's district budget (\$23M), but we did not cut JROTC, we protect it. It produces important benefits for the citizens of this community; the military should put more money into it."*

## **Instructors' Concerns and Recommendations**

### **Instructor Certification**

One area of concern was with possible instructor certification requirements. A related issue is the possibility of making the curriculum more academic. The concern stems from the "*No Child Left Behind*" act, which, many assume, will lead to a more academic program and more credentials required for instructors. Many instructors see two major problems with this: *1) it will create resistance among school faculty whose workload is threatened, and 2) it will decrease motivation among cadets who are attracted to JROTC for reasons other than academics. Others acknowledged that this might be a draw to JROTC for some students.*

This particular concern reflects a change in the JROTC mission, which came up frequently from all data sources. While program stakeholders at the highest levels are extremely concerned with issues of academic credit, curricula standards and objectives, and—ultimately—program viability, instructors at the working level made the following kinds of comments:

*The majority of our kids are attracted to join JROTC because of the activities and the camaraderie, not for the curriculum. We can't do it all.*

*If we create and emphasize a more academic curriculum, we will lose many cadets.*

And, the key question posed by these concerns:

*What is our mission? DoD needs to decide what kind of a program and cadets we want to have.*

### **Inspections**

Other recommendations addressed inspections. Instructors suggested that headquarters customize inspections to schools enabling them to substitute requirements as appropriate, be evaluated based on how they make a difference in lives and what they contribute to the community, and let them be a part of evaluation and inspection. Some said that they would appreciate more help than criticism.

### **Fund Raising**

Instructors also talked about the difficulties they have in fund raising and said they felt it would be useful to get some training on dealing with fund raising or getting community sponsors to help.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSIONS

The JROTC program has changed fundamentally since its inception in the early 1900s. While the military services that participate in the program retain their unique service identities, the primary mission of the program has moved to the development of citizenship and leadership. This research shows that, for exemplary units visited for this study, JROTC performs this mission exceptionally well. The program prepares cadets for life after high school whether that is in the military, a civilian job, or college. Instructors at successful units provide their students with valuable skills, knowledge, and self-confidence. The functions performed by these instructors are different from, and complementary to, the knowledge and skills provided by other school curricula and extracurricular activities.

Data collected from site visits, surveys, focus groups, and interviews suggest that the JROTC program is clear on its mission but not necessarily its target audience. Many stakeholders view the program as targeted for at-risk adolescents. Others focus on the average student who does not excel in academics or athletics. These instructors talk about creating a "*club*" (or "the biggest club on campus") for students who do not fit elsewhere. At the same time, given the pressures perceived by the "No Child Left Behind" act, actions are being taken in response by the services such as upgrading the JROTC curriculum, mapping it to educational standards, and earning academic high school credit for JROTC classes. These actions seem to be at odds with providing a service for at-risk or average students who are primarily attracted to JROTC because of the activities and camaraderie. The attraction of belonging to JROTC for these reasons (vs. academic credit) was repeatedly demonstrated in this study. The researchers wonder if the attempt of the JROTC program to meet all of these needs puts it at risk of becoming stretched very thin and losing some of its effectiveness.

Perhaps the primary explanation for the success of the units visited for this research rests on the ability of the instructors who lead the units to meet the many and varied needs of their stakeholders—students, other teachers, parents, school administrators, and the community. To meet these needs, they work long hours; they engage in creative fund raising to combat insufficient resources; they serve as teachers, counselors, administrators, surrogate parents; and are politically very savvy with respect to relations between their unit and the school and community. With respect to the last point, these units were well integrated with the school and community; they were a visible and valued presence.

Like all good leaders, JROTC instructors at high-performing units are enthusiastic, tireless, and good role models. They set high standards and delegate meaningful work to the cadet chain of command. In this last function, they are comfortable with decreasing their own power to empower the cadets and, in so doing, create unique developmental opportunities. These opportunities cannot be gained anywhere else in the school.

One principal who had served at two schools with JROTC units explained the difference between his previous and current schools by saying, *"A JROTC unit is only as good as the instructors."* In addition to the leadership characteristics noted above, the researchers observed high levels of flexibility and adaptability among the instructors at the site visits. These instructors were focused on their charges as developing adolescents rather than military recruits. They worked to create support for their units with the school and the community by learning and working in their environment rather than judging it in comparison to military organizations. Further, they participated as part of a team of equals with their fellow instructors, regardless of rank. Primarily, instructors were able to adapt to the culture of their schools and communities to meet the needs present at their unique units, whether this meant maintaining the winning drill team, providing a safe environment for cadets, or helping their cadets get into college. They are able to operate effectively across a variety of geographical regions, student abilities and backgrounds, and resource bases.

While not a stated goal, instructors in these units are changing perceptions of the military in areas where negative perceptions may have existed. In pursuit of opportunities for leadership and citizenship development, cadets engage in extensive school and community service. In the extreme case, the school and community see that JROTC is not about *"learning to kill people."* The other side of the issue is that for the many cadets who will never go on to military service, they leave high school with an understanding of the military.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of this report should be given wide distribution so that others may learn from the best practices at successful units. Additionally, the following recommendations are made:

1. *Provide potential JROTC instructors with realistic job previews of what it takes to become successful, including the long hours (this is not "retirement"). This job is about teaching and development (not commanding a military unit), flexibility and adaptability to new cultures, and the development of new skills, e.g. relationship building with civilians.*

2. *Ensure that new instructor training and instructor refresher training provide information on the issues raised in this research such as tips on fund raising, recruiting, publicizing unit successes, relationship building, brainstorming the many activities that can be delegated to cadets, creating parent booster clubs, creating opportunities for recognition for cadets and the units (e.g., awards at school morning colors ceremony, performance of drill team at sports events such as football half time), and the importance of service to, and collaboration with, the school and community to create support for the unit. A unit operating in a vacuum on a high school campus will not succeed.*
3. *Continue to give the units latitude to enhance and creatively use the formal curriculum as determined by the needs of their particular units.*
4. *To create strong teams, search for a mechanism for instructors to have a voice in the selection of new hires. Where available, the DAIs can help this process.*
5. *Review the mission of JROTC with respect to the target audience and consider whether or not all of the current goals can continue to be met in the future.*
6. *To acknowledge the varied needs of the units, and the best practices documented in this research, conduct research involving all program stakeholders to generate new metrics and related inspections procedures.*
7. *Mine cross-service learning. While each service has its uniqueness, all services can benefit from sharing with one another. Where possible, encourage inter-service collaboration.*
8. *Encourage the dissemination of best practices through national meetings, regional meetings, and websites.*

## **Appendix A**

### **Instructor Focus Group Protocol**

#### Group Start-up Procedures:

State purpose of research.

Describe how data will be summarized across individuals.

Get permission to tape record.

#### Questions for Experienced Instructors:

What is your military background and when did you retire?

What made you want to become a JROTC instructor?

What do you see as the mission of this program/ what are the important purposes of the program?

Who is the target audience for your program, i.e., what kinds of kids do you want in your unit and why?

What kinds of credits and how many are awarded for JROTC participation—for each of the four years—in your school?

Do you have any ideas of how other high school or college credits might be earned?

What credentials are required for instructors and senior instructors in your schools?

Who are the people you have to interact with to run your unit and how supportive are they?

What motivates instructors to remain in the program?

What might cause instructors to leave?

Do you have any recommendations for improving the program?

If part of each service curriculum were to become core or common on across all four service, which topics would lend themselves to becoming part of that core and which topics should remain service specific?

What are the key factors for creating a successful JROTC unit?

What vehicles do you have for inter-service cooperation and coordination?

#### Questions for New Instructors:

What is your military background and when did you retire?

What are the pros and cons of taking a job as a JROTC instructor?

How did you hear about this job?

What do you most look forward to accomplishing as a JROTC instructor?

What are your concerns?

Do you plan to acquire more education/training for this job? How and what? Will this include a degree?

What do you think you need to do to make your unit successful and how will you know when you've achieved success?



**Appendix B**  
**Instructor Survey**

# JROTC INSTRUCTOR SURVEY

JROTC Senior Instructors and Instructors:

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has asked Naval Postgraduate School to conduct a comprehensive review of JROTC. The enclosed survey represents one part of the review that is intended to collect your opinions on issues related to the curriculum, credit awarded for JROTC participation, and organizational considerations. We are administering this survey to instructors participating in orientation or in-service training this summer.

No attempt will be made to trace survey responses to individuals. Rather, all responses will be aggregated into categories such as service and geographic region. All data will be summarized and presented to OSD for review.

This survey should not take any longer than 20 minutes.

We appreciate your participation.

**JROTC INSTRUCTOR SURVEY**

1. JROTC Service: Army Navy Air Force Marines

2. Position: Senior Instructor Instructor

3. How many years have you held this position?

Less than 1 1-3 4-6 7-9 10-15 16+

*If less than 1 year, please proceed and stop at question no. 10. For all others, skip to question no. 7 and then proceed to end of survey. Thank you.*

4. How did you find out about this position?

---

5. What motivated you to become a JROTC instructor?

---

6. What are you looking forward to as a JROTC instructor?

---

7. Highest degree attained:

Master's or higher BA/BS AA High School

8. Have you earned a teaching license/certificate?

Yes No In progress

If yes or in progress, please specify type of teaching license/certificate

---

9. Specify the location of your JROTC unit:

---

*County State*

10. Type of school: public private

11. Year your unit was established:

---

12. Approximate number of students in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Number of cadets in your unit at the *beginning* of the last school year: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Number of cadets at the *end* of the last school year: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Approximate number of school or community service events (e.g., color guard, parades, parking management, etc.) that your cadets participated in during the last school year:

---

16. Approximate number of JROTC activities, (e.g., drill competitions, camps, etc.) that your cadets participated in during the last school year: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Using the scale provided, rate the quality of the relationships you and your unit experience with each of all of the groups or people listed:

Very Very

Positive Negative

1 2 3 4

Principal

Counselors

Other school administrators

Faculty

Parents

Local Community

18. Using the scale provided, rate the importance of each of the following as you consider your mission for JROTC at your school. Mark a response for each.

Very Not at all

Important Important

1 2 3 4

Develop citizenship

Develop leadership skills

Improve academic performance

Create interest in joining military

Create interest in going to college

Develop character and values

Keep students in school

Create a sense of belonging

Create openness to more opportunities

Teach life skills

Other (please specify):

---

19. Now, please look back to #18 and list below the **three** factors that you think are the **most important** aspects of your mission for JROTC.

---

---

---

20. Specify percentage of time you spend instructing various levels of JROTC students:

1<sup>st</sup> year \_\_\_\_\_ %

2<sup>nd</sup> year \_\_\_\_\_ %

3<sup>rd</sup> year \_\_\_\_\_ %

4<sup>th</sup> year \_\_\_\_\_ %

TOTAL = 100 %

21. What delivery methods will your unit use next school year (not including drill) to teach JROTC? (check all that apply)

Lecture Computer-based instruction

Videos Exercises/Games

Group Discussion Other \_\_\_\_\_

(please specify)

22. Please indicate the type of credit that is awarded for each year of participation in JROTC at your school. Specify the subject area and whether it satisfies as a graduation requirement or as an elective credit.

*For example, Madison High allows JROTC as a substitute for PE in Years 1 and 2. Madison requires PE in Years 1 and 2, so JROTC satisfies a graduation requirement. Madison also allows JROTC to substitute for History as an elective in Year 3.*

Graduation Elective

Year Subject Area Requirement Credit

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

23. Please rate your JROTC instructor conditions compared with conditions in other civilian jobs for which you are qualified. MARK A RESPONSE FOR EACH.

Much Somewhat About the Somewhat Much Don't

Better Better Same Worse Worse Know

Pay

Benefits

Job satisfaction

Working hours/schedule

Time for personal life

Use of military skills

Overall quality of life

Personal freedom

Job security

Other (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

24. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your JROTC job? MARK A RESPONSE FOR EACH.

Strongly Strongly

Agree Agree Neither Disagree Disagree

I would advise a friend

to become an instructor

I would leave for a

better paying job

I "settled" for this job

because of lack of

alternatives

It would be difficult to find  
another suitable job right  
now

25. If you had five minutes to talk to your JROTC service head, what would want to say  
about JROTC?

Thank you for your time!

## **Appendix C**

### **Student Focus Group Protocol**

#### Group Start-up Procedures:

State purpose of research.

Describe how data will be summarized across individuals.

Administer student survey, then go to focus group questions.

#### Focus Group Questions:

What do you like most about JROTC?

What do you like least about JROTC?

What have you learned from the classroom activities and material?

What have you learned about the military?

What have you learned about leadership?

What other things have you learned?

What makes this a good unit? How is it different from others you see at competitions?

What are you most proud of about your unit?

What would you like to change about JROTC?

Do you have parents or other relatives in the military?

Will you join the military?

## Appendix D Student Survey

Please answer the following questions about yourself to help us analyze the results of the focus group we will conduct today. We are not interested in your name, but it will be helpful to us to know more about how many men and women are represented, years of JROTC experience, etc.

Gender:      Female\_\_\_\_\_      Male\_\_\_\_\_

What year of JROTC participation is this for you?

1<sup>st</sup>\_\_\_\_\_      2<sup>nd</sup>\_\_\_\_\_      3<sup>rd</sup>\_\_\_\_\_      4<sup>th</sup>\_\_\_\_\_

Do you occupy a position of leadership in this unit?      Yes\_\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what is that position?\_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about JROTC?

Did anyone recommend the program to you?      Yes\_\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what is your relationship to the person who recommended it, for example, friend, counselor, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend the program to other students?      Yes\_\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_\_

What were some of your reasons for joining JROTC?

Will you enroll in JROTC the next term?      Yes\_\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_\_

the following term?      Yes\_\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not?

What have you learned from being in JROTC and how will it help you in the future?

## **Appendix E**

### **Administrator Protocol**

#### Group Start-up Procedures:

State purpose of research.

Describe how data will be summarized across individuals.

#### Administrator Questions:

Position and tenure?

School demographics, e.g., number of students by gender, race, and percent eligible for free or reduced lunch?

What purpose does JROTC serve in your school?

What are the benefits/outcomes of the program?

What population does JROTC serve at your school? What population should it serve?

What makes this unit successful?

Do you have any recommendations for improving JROTC?

What impact will the "No Child Left Behind" act have on instructors in the JROTC program?

#### Additional Question for Counselors:

Do you recommend JROTC participation? To whom? Why?

#### Additional Question for Superintendent:

What differences do you see among the JROTC units in your district?

## **Appendix F**

### **JROTC Instructor Interview Protocol**

#### Group Start-up Procedures:

State purpose of research.

Describe how data will be summarized across individuals.

#### Instructor Questions:

What is your military background and when did you retire?

What made you want to become a JROTC instructor?

What do you see as the mission of this program/ what are the important purposes of the program?

Who is the target audience for your program, i.e., what kinds of kids do you want in your unit and why?

What kinds of credits and how many are awarded for JROTC participation—for each of the four years—in your school?

What credentials are required for instructors and senior instructors in your schools?

Who are the people you have to interact with to run your unit and how supportive are they? How do you gain their support?

Do you have any recommendations for improving the program?

If part of each service curriculum were to become core or common on across all four service, which topics would lend themselves to becoming part of that core and which topics should remain service specific?

What are the key factors for creating a successful JROTC unit?

What vehicles do you have for inter-service cooperation and coordination?

What are the needs of your specific unit? How do you address them?

What makes your unit unique?



## **Appendix G**

### **Parent Protocol**

#### Group Start-up Procedures:

State purpose of research.

Describe how data will be summarized across individuals.

#### Parent Questions:

Is there a parents' booster club here? Are you part of it?

What do you think your children have learned by being in JROTC?

Do you expect that your son's/daughter's participation will be helpful in the future? How?

Why did your child join JROTC?

What makes this unit so effective?

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Paul Duffy, Director, USMC JROTC Program Training and Education Command C 469, MCCDC 3300 Russell Road Quantico, VA 22134-5001	1
Durant Senior High School LTC R. Sheffield 4748 Cougar Path Plant City, FL 33567	1
Armando X. Estrada NDU-ICAF (Bldg. 59) 408 Fourth Ave. Fort McNair, DC 20319-5062	1
COL Carlos Glover Director JROTC JROTC Directorate Fort Monroe, VA 23651	1
Grimsley Senior High School LTC McKayhan 801 Westover Terrace Greensboro, NC 27408	1
James Madison High School LTC A. Cano 5005 Stahl Rd. San Antonio, TX 78247-1799	1

John Jay High School LTC D. LeVan 7611 Marbach Rd. San Antonio, TX 78227	1
Janice H. Laurence, Director, Research & Evaluation Windwalker Corporation 1355 Beverly Rd. Suite 330 McLean, VA 22101	1
MAJ Brenda K. Leong, Asst. Director, Officer Accession Programs OUSD (P&R) Room 2B271 4000 Defense Pentagon Washington, DC 20301-4000	1
John Marshall High School CAPT V. Henley 8000 Lobo Lane San Antonio, TX 78240-2699	1
Luther Burbank High School CDR M. Robins 3500 Florin Rd. Sacramento, CA 95823	1
Monterey High School BMCM Wade Willingham 101 Herrmann Drive Monterey, Ca 93940	1
Mt. Vernon High School COL W. DeHoust 8515 Old Mt. Vernon Rd. Alexandria, VA 22309	
Mira Mesa High School LTC D. Ritter 10510 Reagan Rd. San Diego, CA 92126	1

Oak Grove High School LTC M. McKinnis 285 Blossom Hill Rd. San Jose, CA 95123	1
Point Loma High School CDR McClung 2335 Chatsworth Blvd. San Diego, CA 92106	1
Donna Rice, Chief Operations, Education and Training JROTC Directorate Fort Monroe, VA 23651	1
R.S. Central High School MAJ Armentrout PO Box 1119641 US Highway 221 Rutherfordton, NC 28139-0119	1
Seaside High School Dr. Bettye Lusk P.O. Box 1030 Monterey, CA 93942	1
Dr. J.D. Smith CNET (NJROTC) 250 Dallas St. Pensacola, FL 32508-5220	1
Southeast Guilford High School CAPT P. Hampton 4530 SE School Rd. Greensboro, NC	1
Sweetwater High School COL Jackson 2900 Highland Ave. San Diego, CA 91950-7495	1

Gail Thomas Naval Postgraduate School Graduate School of Business and Public Policy Monterey, CA 93943-5103	1
James Utsler 382 B Bergin Drive Monterey, CA 93940	1
Willowridge Senior High School LTC Duhe 16301 Chimmney Rock Houston, TX 77053-4299	1